

## **Cinematic Narratives: Transatlantic Perspectives**

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## Don's Journey

*Broken Flowers* by Jim Jarmusch

*Spring brings the rain,  
With winter comes pain,  
Every season has an end.*

"There Is an End"—*The Greenhorns* featuring  
HOLLY GOLIGHTLY

### Introduction

Jim Jarmusch is considered by many as one of the most prominent American indie directors of our time. He began filming in the 1980s and, since then, his films have been acclaimed, both by critics and viewers alike, as important visual works that reflect upon the importance of the American landscape, identity, and the journey, particularly because of the revisions of the road movie genre they offer. Unlike most road movies, Jarmusch's films are not about speed, motion, and action. Instead, he prefers to reveal the purpose of the journey at a much slower pace, as if he is searching for a true, deeper meaning in the character's voyage, however painful and unfulfilling it may be. In fact, most of his characters are on a journey, sometimes adrift, other

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times with a specific destination; however, most often than not they are on an aimless quest, because, as David Laderman points out, in most of Jarmusch's films "nothing happens" (145) and "wherever you go, you really have gone nowhere" (148).

The aim of this essay is to analyze the implications of the journey in *Broken Flowers* as Don, the protagonist, visits his ex-lovers. This study will take into consideration how, in this film, Jarmusch reflects upon time, love, broken dreams, and absence as Don revisits his past so as to become familiar with the world again.

The first part of this study will focus on Jarmusch's previous work to explore how some of the motifs and themes recurrent in these films are also present in *Broken Flowers*. The second part analyzes *Broken Flowers*, considering the meaning of Don's journey and the several places he visits, each signifying something different. Lastly, the third part functions as a conclusion and looks at Don's return in the final scene of the film. This will be analyzed in light of two potential meanings for the protagonist: the possibility or the inability to move forward with his life. The purpose of this study is also to try to understand how *Broken Flowers* reflects the more experimental and underground features of Jarmusch's way of filming: one that privileges the importance of chance rather than an organized system.

## Jim Jarmusch, the Melancholic

*Stranger than Paradise* (1984), his first major film, is a good example of how Jarmusch uses road stories in order to explore the (aimless) purpose of the journey, focusing his attention more on the stationary scenes than on the driving scenes. In fact, staying still, as opposed to being in movement, is so exaggerated in Jarmusch's films that it is something that becomes ironic because it stands for the characters' emptiness, as Laderman points out:

Stability is so ... exaggerated it becomes an excessive caricature, the extreme opposite of movement and motivation, an "emptiness" in the *mise en scène*, a void that only mobility can fill. Yet mobility too will be "empty," unfulfilling, a rearticulation of nonmovement. (145)

In Jarmusch, rebellion comes from nonmovement rather than from the perpetual velocity so characteristic of typical road movies. For Jarmusch, stasis is more important in terms of narrative structure than motion or speed is. This priority reflects his independent way of making films that comes from the time he started distancing himself (as other auteurs did) from High Concept Hollywood films.

*Stranger than Paradise* also introduces other important features that are constantly revisited by Jarmusch: characters who are mainly outsiders or misfits; questions of language, identity, and immigration; the sense of transitoriness and directionlessness and a certain consciousness of “retreat into obscurity” (Mills 173) without giving his audience a concrete answer at the end of his films. He also explores the deceptive aspects of the American Dream by depicting American culture from various angles and by using several different locations for his creations: New York, New Orleans, Memphis, the American West, New Jersey, Los Angeles; or in other cities abroad, such as Barcelona, Paris, Rome, or Helsinki.

Although *Stranger than Paradise* may function as a synthesis of some of the main cinematic and visual characteristics that we can find in Jarmusch's films, it is important to look at his other films. In his first visual experiment, *Permanent Vacation* (1980), a film shot in 16 mm, Jarmusch was already working with a character wandering temporarily through New York City (until leaving for Paris), and also with *poseurs*, losers, and pariahs. In this sense Jarmusch tries to call our attention to a world heavily marked by absence and to the lack of a sense of community. Jarmusch's characters, mainly male, are somehow strangers in an unfamiliar place, constantly moving and in transit, as in *Down by Law* (1986), Jarmusch's third film. In this film, Zack and Jack embark on both a physical and an emotional journey in search of their own freedom. A third character, Bob, an Italian, saves them by helping them escape from prison—a metaphor for the foreigner as a kind of moral savior. Jarmusch uses this narrative as a way of criticizing the idyllic vision of the United States, especially with his portrayal of the American characters who seem to be empty, disoriented, and uprooted (Ródenas 288).

In *Mystery Train* (1989), his next film, the characters are presented as modern pilgrims set out to experience Memphis—the iconic place where Elvis lived—here presented as a kind of ghost town where Jarmusch reflects upon American popular culture and identity. Contrary to *Down by Law*, in *Mystery Train* the director chooses to depict the immigrant not as the savior

of the American culture but as an important character of that same culture: a minority figure who in some way struggles against the dominant culture.

*Night on Earth* (1991), Jarmusch's fifth film, expands on some of his main themes from a global perspective, since he presents five different stories in five different places and time zones. The storyline explores his concern about the idea of miscommunication, language, time, and people in constant transition. Moreover, *Night on Earth* also highlights other important themes that will be constantly present in Jarmusch's films, especially loneliness, emptiness, and the impossibility of meaningful communication. This last issue is particularly evident in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1997) or in *Coffee and Cigarettes* (1986-2003).

*Dead Man* (1995), which was directed two years before *Ghost Dog*, is also vital in Jarmusch's career because it represents the ultimate postmodern western and, at the same time, the voyage of a man into a place that is alien to him. The protagonist, ironically called Blake, goes through a spiritual journey from Hell to Purgatory and, finally, to Paradise in what is, essentially, a film about the loss of innocence and different attitudes towards death. In the same manner, it is also a critique of the west as a place of opportunities and fulfillment. Again, Jarmusch is presenting us a less glamorous America, one that can only be seen through the eyes of characters who do not belong to it. The same can be said of his latest creations: *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013) and *Paterson* (2016), which also use the journey motif. The first film takes us on a particular journey through the eyes of ancient (supernatural) creatures, while the second is a reflection upon the beauty of the mundane and day-to-day existence.

Thus, the journey is a very important motif for Jarmusch because it allows him to assess the landscape and the nation. In one way or another, all his characters are in motion, in search of something that (sometimes) they cannot seem to find. For that reason, they appear to be empty and desperate, and the character who best embodies that kind of despair and melancholy is Don Johnston in *Broken Flowers*.

### ***Broken Flowers***

*Broken Flowers* (2005) is the story of an aging Don Juan, Don (Bill Murray), who embarks on a cross-country journey after receiving an anonymous pink letter from an unnamed former girlfriend stating that he has a son who

supposedly is looking for him. In order to find out the truth, he has to track down his ex-lovers from his youth, a quest that will take him on a physical and emotional journey into the past and, at the same time, into possible futures.

The film opens with the camera focusing on a pink letter that will be delivered to Don's house. The song "There Is an End" by *The Greenhornes* with Holly Golightly is playing, and the viewer is confronted with a jet-lagged Bill Murray/Don Johnston, post-*Lost in Translation* (2003) (de Pedro 1).<sup>1</sup> He is sitting on his couch watching a black and white film about Don Juan<sup>2</sup> but he is staring blankly at the screen, while his girlfriend Sherry (Julie Delpy) is about to leave him because he is incapable of a serious commitment. In fact, all he actually wants is to sit on his couch, listen to some classical music, and watch old films, a sign of his passivity and immobility, as he makes practically no effort to prevent Sherry from leaving. Having made a small fortune in the computer industry, despite not even owning a computer, his only desire is to enjoy his retirement quietly.

Nevertheless, his life changes when he receives a pink letter stating that he has a son. This pink letter is a representation of the deceptive side of love and, at the same time, a strong and powerful symbol of feminine identity and of the past. The pink color is the only clue Don has in order to find his son's mother—hence the play with the detective genre present in this film—but it is also a hoax, since, as the action progresses, we see that Jarmusch employs the color pink for all the female characters. This connection emphasizes the aimless quest undertaken by the male protagonist. As Don searches for

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1 The way Bill Murray is depicted in this film is similar to how he appears in *Lost in Translation*, his deadpan face conveying a sense of emptiness and uneasiness. Plus, as in Sofia Coppola's film he embarks on a journey—an involuntary one—that will help him to understand himself better. Despite the fact that Murray developed specific and unique traits that define his acting persona, it is important to highlight the fact that between 2003-2005 he played three characters who are, more or less, similar. In *Lost in Translation* he plays Bob, a faded movie star, who finds himself with Charlotte (Scarlet Johansson), while exploring the streets of modern Tokyo. Then, he plays Steve Zissou in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004) by Wes Anderson, a film where he is on a quest to avenge his friend killed by a shark but instead has to deal with the fact that he may or may not have a son. And, finally, in *Broken Flowers* Don discovers that he has a son who is searching for him. So he goes on a journey to find out who the mother is. If in no other way, the three films are interconnected by the fact that they explore notions of identity, the importance of meaningful communication, loneliness, and, above all, the transforming power of the journey, even when the changes in the characters are not clear.

2 The film is *The Private Life of Don Juan* (1934), by Alexander Korda, based upon the play *L'homme à la Rose* (1920) by Henri Bataille, which functions here as a way of introducing the myth of Don Juan and the notion of nostalgia, since Don is watching a film about the past. At the same time the film is also about an aging Don Juan, which mirrors Don's own condition.

evidence, particularly anything with the color pink, we realize that the color depicts different stages of love and life: lust, love, marriage, depression, and absence. Still, it is important to note that the pink letter is the spark that ignites the flame of possibility and, therefore, the transforming object that makes Don go on the road, even if at first he dismisses the situation and does not seem to care.

With the help of Winston, his neighbor, Don finds his ex-girlfriends' addresses and goes on the road. It is Winston who insists that Don go and look for his son. Don clearly contrasts with his neighbor. Whereas Winston constitutes an example of energy and will, Don is stagnant, showing no interest in life-changing opportunities. Whereas Don is single, rich, and has a good car and a good house, Winston is an immigrant with three different jobs, has a family, desires to become a novelist, but notwithstanding his difficulties he struggles to conquer the American Dream.<sup>3</sup>

This is a good example of how, in Jarmusch's films, American culture fascinates the foreigner more than those who are born into it. In a nutshell, Winston is a happy man, even if he has to work many hours a day; Don, on the other hand, is a fragmented man, someone who has been slowly dissociating himself from real life by living in a kind of perpetual disenchantment which augments his angst and torment. These feelings are amplified when Don considers what he might find on his journey, especially if one considers C. K. Bellinger's definition of angst:

Angst is that uneasiness that results from the individual's awareness that he could possibly be different than he is currently ... . There is a possibility that is open to him, which could become an actuality. But what would be the consequence of this actuality? He does not know and is thus anxious. He is drawn to the possibility, but at the same time he is made uncomfortable by it. (38)

Therefore, although Don ends up agreeing to go on the road, it is not without a certain sense of uneasiness, since he feels uncomfortable about what might come of this journey. In most road movies travelling is a way of solving the character's issues, and the automobile functions as the tool used

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<sup>3</sup> In the first opening shots, the camera travels slowly from left to right filming a typical American neighborhood, showing first Winston's house and then Don's, focusing on the economic disparity between both characters. Nevertheless, it is ironic that Don has dinner regularly at Winston's house, a sign of his loneliness.

to uncover some hidden truth or some problem that must be solved. But Don does not seem to be eager to be on the road, since he prefers to stay in his house and avoid any kind of change. Still, as the end of the film tries to convey, and despite its ambiguous tone, the journey undertaken by the main character is the representation of the possibility of some kind of change.

According to Oliveira (125), *Broken Flowers* is not only Don's personal journey but also Jarmusch's return to the "country of his youth", since the director uses Don as a tool to enquire about what happened to the nation of his youth and to all the dreams held when he was younger. As Don visits his former lovers looking for the author of the pink letter, so Jarmusch seems to search for answers, only to be constantly deceived, as Don is deceived while searching for his son; both are looking for something that, in a certain way, seems impossible to recover. Don's journey is also more than a nostalgic inquiry into the past, because his quest symbolizes the human journey from youth to death, as is verified while he slowly crosses the nation. During his several stops, Don finds a desolate and lost country, until finally he reaches a cemetery where one of his ex-lovers is buried. While there are some positive (and maybe even sexual) aspects associated with the outset of Don's journey, his path is marked by the lonely lives of the women he visits, because each woman "has been disillusioned and emotionally broken by love" (McCabe 174).

Don's presence will highlight that feeling of broken love, either because the women get a glimpse of the past (as he does) and confront themselves with the unchanged, sad present, or because Don's presence awakens in them the desire to be in love again. The first ex-lover he visits embodies the latter idea perfectly because she is the only one who sleeps with Don, turning the feeling into something physical. Laura (Sharon Stone) has lost her husband in a car accident, and Don temporarily becomes her lover again, although in the morning we can see his deadpan and empty face while lying in bed, a visual statement that the previous night was meaningless to him. It is also during this first visit that Jarmusch draws the viewer's attention to the idea of a lost nation, mainly through Laura's daughter (Alexis Dziena), ironically called Lolita. She is a representation of the shadow of her mother in the past and of the meaningless liaisons that Don once had in his youth. Lolita is also the embodiment of a country out of control, with no sense of direction and no rules, a reality emphasized by the way she offers herself to Don while he is waiting for her mother to arrive home, or when mother and daughter are



saying goodbye, one dressed in a pink robe and the other almost half-naked, a symbol of desire teasing the weary road traveller.

From here onwards, Don's journey will only get worse. The next woman he visits is Dora (Frances Conroy), a former hippie and probably Don's greatest love. As Don reunites with Dora, he no longer recognizes her, because she stands for no more than a lost memory in a picture taken many years before. Once a hippie, she is now someone who has accepted her place in a capitalist society bound by money and success, even if living that life is just a representation of happiness (again the illusory side of the American Dream) and not of real happiness, as all the signs indicate. Her life is meticulously organized and aseptic, empty, silent, asset-building, and functional. She is a real-estate agent (her business cards are pink)<sup>4</sup> and has no children, not because she cannot have them, but as we learn afterwards, because she does not want to have them. This may have to do with the fact that they would be brought into the desolate and sad world of the life she shares with her husband. Also, the reunion between Don and Dora brings forth another important aspect, the question of time, as Peter Bradshaw argues:

What *Broken Flowers* has to offer, along with some big laughs, is one very shrewd truth. Life is very, very short and, while you have been looking the other way, it has been stealthily getting on with the business of burning itself out. Each time Don sees one of his old partners, there is a long look of utter blankness on her face and then a jolt of recognition. It is the feeling that any one of us can have on seeing someone we knew intimately 20 years ago: a realisation that they look old, and then, a millisecond later, the realisation that they must be thinking the same about us, and that therefore we are old too. (1)

As Don searches for the truth about his son, he also realizes that he is not what he used to be. Time has passed and things have changed. Like his former lovers he has reached a place where there is no turning back; he thus has to accept his old life and conform himself to reality as it is. Most of the intimate moments in this film are about the importance of finding meaning in life and happiness again, but they are also about the absence of happiness and about those painful moments in which the protagonists realize they did not achieve

<sup>4</sup> As with Laura's pink robe, the cards that Dora has can be seen as functioning as a false clue to complicate Don's mission of finding who sent him the letter. The cards, her husband's idea, also represent the way her life is clearly organized.

their goals in life. For this purpose, Jarmusch turns his camera to the silent moments—for instance the dinner scene at Dora's house —insinuating the bleak emotional landscape that slowly unfolds throughout the film, revealed in the life of all the characters. This is especially the case of the third ex-lover, Dr. Carmen (Jessica Lange), an animal communicator (she has been able to hear animals since her dog Winston died).<sup>5</sup> Carmen is the metaphor for the rejection of traditional love, as she has been repeatedly hurt. As a result, it is clear that she has a relationship with her assistant (Chloë Sevigny) and finds comfort in other kinds of interactions, like “communicating” with animals, for instance. Still, she is not the one who wrote the letter, and Don must go on with his journey.

His next trip will take him into the heart of the nation, and to a traditional America, where he will find Penny<sup>6</sup> (Tilda Swinton), the metaphor for the cold brutality of life and the embodiment of the illusory side of the American Dream. Don asks her if she has a son and she gets angry.<sup>7</sup> Her boyfriend hits Don hard in the eye and he passes out. The next morning he finds himself alone in a cornfield, his shirt covered with blood, as he awakens to the painful realization of nothingness in his life and the impossibility of love, as Janet McCabe comments:

As he drifts from one past love to another, Johnston is given the opportunity, an intimate glimpse even, to imagine what his life could have been if he had committed to one of these women—the single mum Laura (Sharon Stone) with the sexually precocious daughter aptly named Lolita (Alexis Dziena), the hippy Dora (Frances Conroy) who is now a respectable suburban wife, the trainee lawyer Carmen Marowski (Jessica Lange) who is now an animal communicator having a lesbian

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5 In fact, while she is talking to Don, a cat approaches them and apparently tells Carmen that he has a hidden agenda, an interesting fact since Don never tells his ex-lovers that he is looking for the mother of his son. The name of the dog is not an innocent reference. This is what makes Don suspicious that Winston could have tricked him into going on this journey just so he could write a mystery novel based upon Don's travelling experience, clearly a representation of the New America represented by the immigrant Winston feeding off the Old America in order to tell other stories. Here, again, Jarmusch leaves a clue: Carmen is wearing pink trousers, just to deceive us once more.

6 It is when Don visits Penny that he sees a pink motorcycle and a pink typewriter, probably the biggest clue up until now that she might have been the one who sent the letter.

7 There is an interesting detail here. This is the only episode in which Don does not buy flowers, picking them instead in the nearby fields, and the only one in which he asks one of his former lovers about a son.

affair with her assistant (Chloë Sevigny), the bitter Penny (Tilda Swinton) who lives in the backwoods with her biker beau, and then there is the former lover who died. Of course he did not choose an intimate future with any one, but through these past relationships the film does question the whole notion of the one. (174)

Although Don gets a glimpse of what his life might have been, it is also important to think about the way Jarmusch portrays the ex-lovers. Note how all the other families are somehow broken and in some way devoid of love, which makes them dysfunctional: Laura and Lolita with their sexual innuendos and the absence of a masculine figure, Dora and the absence of children and happiness, Carmen with the absence of reality, and Penny with the absence of family (possibly a son). However, all of them seem to cope with that reality and, more than that, although their lives seem to be empty they are not alone, as Don is. This brutal truth is visually explicit when Don visits his last ex-lover, Michelle Pepe, who is dead and therefore a representation of complete absence. In this scene the cruelty of aging becomes real, and at the end of the journey the protagonist understands that it is impossible to form new meaningful relationships, as Donna Peberdy describes:

... the cemetery scene marks the peak of Don's emotional journey and offers his most emotive performance of angst. With a plaster on his head, a bloody cut across his cheek and bruised eye—resulting from a clash with another ex-girlfriend—Don displays his wounds both physically and emotionally. Murray's eyes and head move slowly and slightly to one side, hesitantly glancing at the floor and then away as if not knowing where to look. He gulps, his eyes well up, his lips tremble, and his shoulders rise and fall to correspond with his shallow and laboured breathing. The result is an emotion held back: a conscious attempt not to cry. The context of the wider film assists in the recognition that Don's sadness results not from the death of the ex-girlfriend but the realisation that he is a lonely bachelor in his fifties with no established relationships. (68)

The possibility of having a son makes Don search for that family (and stability) he does not have. It is the possibility of the feeling of familiarity that makes him continue with this journey. However, as he places pink flowers on Michelle's grave he leans against a tree and mourns her, but he also mourns his own sad, lonely life as he realizes that every season has an end and that he has not left any kind of legacy in the world.

## Every Season Has an End

Jarmusch is a director who, like David Lynch or Alexander Payne, is interested in journeys that are “dramas of quiet revelations rather than ... dramatic gestures of rebellion” (Mills 202). Don Johnston is not a character fit for the road or, for that matter, fit to be traveling, because most of the action in this film takes place in his nonmovement. Again, Jarmusch uses irony to depict Don's character. He is a paralyzed figure in his movement, so this is a road movie with a different pace, one in which the protagonist seems “weary of roads (and road movies)” (Laderman 145).

Nevertheless, in most road movies, after the journey ends the character has changed somewhat and has found some kind of answer for his/her problems. Although it seems that Don is willing to change in order to form a family, Jarmusch refuses to give us any kind of easy way out. As Katie Mills (173) suggests, the director belongs to a group of filmmakers who are reluctant to tell stories about change. Their endings are purposely enigmatic, insisting upon a possibility of change but never on the change itself. This particular open ending is representative of the power of the road: while one is on a journey anything can happen. The combination of impossibility and possibility adds a tone of ambiguity in a film that is rooted clearly in the irony developed by the director in putting Don's character in search of something he is unable to find: forming a family or becoming a father. This is particularly evident when Don returns home.

As Devin Orgeron points out (185), Jarmusch tell us a circular story, from home to home. Don has tried to bring together the pieces of his “misdirected life” (idem) in order to find significance and stability, but unlike his friend and neighbor Winston, he is unable to do so. Although he has money, a good house, and a good car, he lacks all the other important things, such as family and love. The news he received in the letter shook him up from his lonely and boring life, but brought him to an abyss. However, when he returns to his house, he appears to have some hope that his son may find him.

As he arrives home, he has received another pink letter, but this time from Sherry, the woman who left him at the beginning of the film, and she claims to love him still. The letter sent by Sherry is an example of how Jarmusch is playing with Don's character and with the spectator as well, since it is possible to interpret Sherry—also dressed in pink in the opening scene—as the author of the first letter, written in order to stir Don's feeling,

to make him to want to be alive again. At the beginning of the film Don does not care whether she goes or stays. There is no demonstration of feelings whatsoever. Now, after his trip, Don realizes how family is important and he might contemplate accepting the second chance Sherry is giving him. But, once again, Jarmusch is unclear whether or not the pink letter from the opening scene functions as an illusionary device to force Don on his journey.

After reporting all the news about the trip and the arrival of this new letter to Winston, Don encounters someone who could be his son when he goes to a café. In fact, the viewer has been opened to the idea that Don may meet his son by chance while on the road because Jarmusch inserts several clues that point to the existence of a descendant who may be encountered randomly: a pink robe, pink cards, pink trousers, a pink typewriter, a pink motorcycle, and some youngsters who share physical attributes with Don. In this particular case, the young man who might be his son has a small pink ribbon tied to his bag. Don approaches him and asks him if he is hungry and brings him food. They both sit outside and talk.

This scene is shot in such a way that the characters actually seem like a father and a son, which allows Don to get a glimpse of what the experience of parenthood might mean. Adopting this role, he even gives some philosophical advice to the young man: “The past is gone. I know that. The future isn’t here yet, whatever it may bring. All there is, is this. The present, and that’s it.” This piece of advice indicates that Don, after his own personal journey, has somehow forgiven himself for his past, and is willing to learn how to live in the present.

In some ways this scene is the confirmation that Don is willing to accept his role as a father and wants to embrace it to avoid the meaningless life he has led until now. Still, when Don enquires into the possibility of being the young man’s father, he frightens him. The young man runs away, and Don chases after him but loses sight of him—a clear sign that he really does want to recover this unknown part of his life.

The final scene of the film puts Don at a crossroads. As Don recovers from running, he is aware of a Volkswagen Beetle coming from the other side of the road with another young man inside who looks like him,<sup>8</sup> which might

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8 Two important notes: 1) the young man in the passenger’s seat is, in fact, Homer Murray, Bill Murray’s real son; 2) he is listening to the same music that Don was listening to when he was on the road. This establishes some sort of connection that might indicate this character could be Don’s son.

indicate that there is still some hope, although the scene is very enigmatic, as Roger Ebert comments:

At the end there is an enigmatic scene that explains little or nothing. Still, it opens up the possibility that if Don ever did discover he had a son, he would try to do the right thing. That would mean he was doing something, and that would be a start. (1)

In this final scene the camera circles around and zooms in on Don's face, highlighting his "disorientation and vulnerability" (Peberdy 75), leaving him in a position where is trying to decide between two different paths. The first one points towards a direction full of opportunities as Ebert notes, a path in which Murray's character is willing to change his life. The arrival of this last character is a sign that there is still hope for him. If Don is willing to follow this youngster, it means that he still hopes to find his son; otherwise, he would not keep going. In addition, Sherry still loves him, so there is the possibility of a family on the horizon: Sherry, his son, and himself.

The second path is much more gloomy and enigmatic: one in which the perpetual hope is nothing more than a continuous illusion. It is a trajectory where Don goes from immobility to immobility and, therefore, the possibility of self-fulfillment is almost impossible, since the protagonist ends up chasing ghosts. Thus, the film ends, more or less as it starts, with a broken man, wondering if he really has a son, but also pondering if his time is over. If he follows this path it means returning to the couch and television of the opening scene, and to a truly alienated and lonely life.

As expected, Jarmusch insists on maintaining an open-ended narrative by putting Don in the middle of the road, leaving it up to him (and to us) to choose the right direction. Nonetheless, there is an important piece of information that might shed some light on what happens to Don. The initial title for the film was supposed to be *Dead Flowers*, which, right from the beginning, would have pointed to the complete impossibility of fulfillment and redemption on the road. Yet, the title of the film is *Broken Flowers*, and we must ask ourselves if something that is broken can or cannot be mended. Like Don's bruise on his eyebrow, the cut remains as a reminder of the wounds inflicted upon ourselves; there is, however, always the possibility of putting a plaster—a healing metaphor—and waiting for the wound to heal. In this manner, the film represents something more: a reflection/revision of the

past, of the family, of time, and of all the decisions we make in life. If every season has an ending, there is also the certainty that after each one ends, there is another one starting anew.

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